

under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 as amended.

(x) Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

(1) *Finding of no significant impact (FNSI)*. (40 CFR 1508.13) “Finding of No Significant Impact” means a document by a Federal agency briefly presenting the reasons why an action not otherwise excluded (§1508.4) will not have a significant effect on the human environment, and an environmental impact statement therefore will not be prepared. It shall include the environmental assessment or a summary of it and shall note any other environmental documents related to it (§1501.7(a)(5)). If the assessment is included, the finding need not repeat any of the discussion in the assessment but may incorporate it by reference.

[44 FR 50579, Aug. 29, 1979, as amended at 44 FR 54981, Sept. 24, 1979]

#### § 650.5 Environmental evaluation in planning.

(a) *General*. Environmental evaluation (EE) integrates environmental concerns throughout the planning, installation, and operation of NRCS-assisted projects. The EE applies to all assistance provided by NRCS, but planning intensity, public involvement, and documentation of actions vary according to the scope of the action. NRCS begins consideration of environmental

concerns when information gathered during the environmental evaluation is used:

(1) To identify environmental concerns that may be affected, gather baseline data, and predict effects of alternative courses of actions;

(2) To provide data to applicants for use in establishing objectives commensurate with the scope and complexity of the proposed action;

(3) To assist in the development of alternative courses of action; (40 CFR 1502.14). In NRCS-assisted project actions, nonstructural, water conservation, and other alternatives that are in keeping with the Water Resources Council's Principles and Standards are considered, if appropriate.

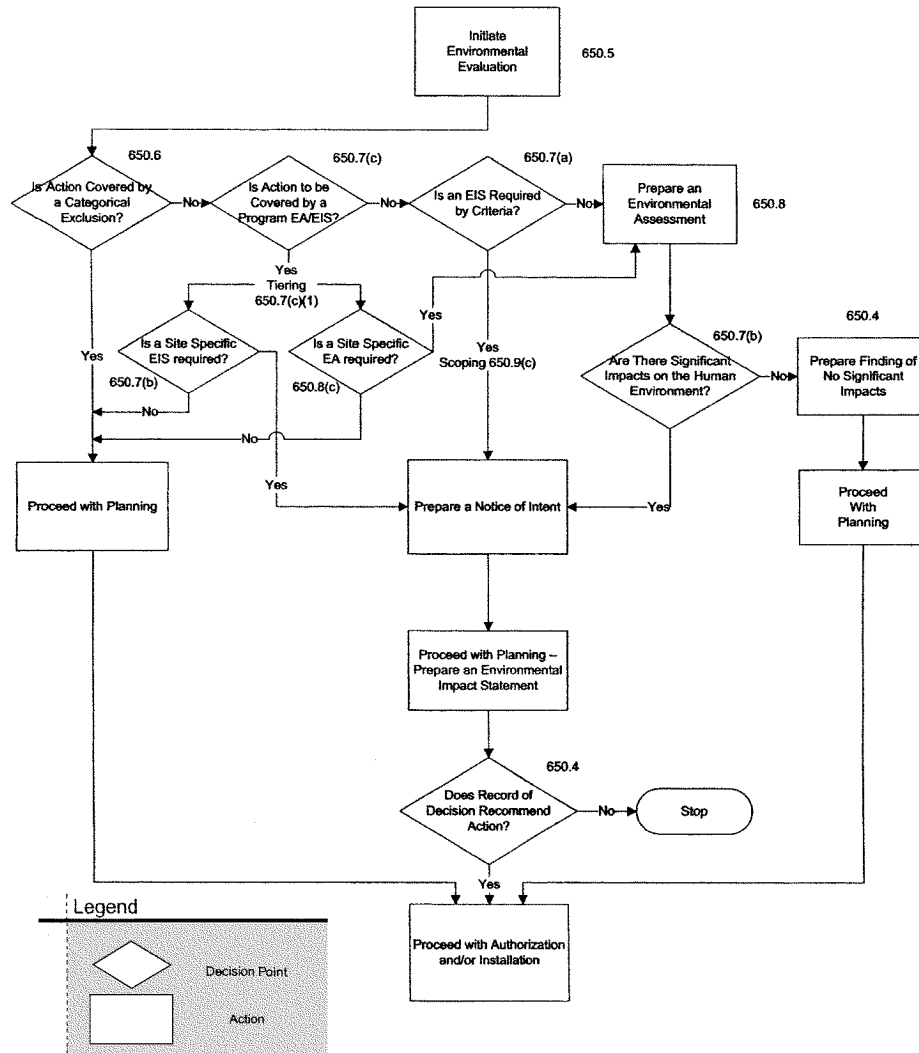
(4) To perform other related investigations and analyses as needed, including economic evaluation, engineering investigations, etc.

(5) To assist in the development of detailed plans for implementation and operation and maintenance.

(b) *Procedures*. NRCS's Guide for Environmental Assessment issued in March 1977 and published in the FEDERAL REGISTER on August 8, 1977, provides guidance for conducting an environmental evaluation. (42 FR 40123-40167).

(c) *Decision points*. Figure 1 illustrates the decision points for compliance with NEPA in NRCS decision-making.

## NEPA in NRCS Planning



[44 FR 50579, Aug. 29, 1979, as amended at 73 FR 35884, June 25, 2008]

### § 650.6 Categorical exclusions.

(a) Some NRCS programs or parts of programs do not normally create significant individual or cumulative impacts on the human environment. Therefore, an EA or EIS is not needed.

These are data gathering and interpretation programs and include:

- (1) Soil Survey—7 CFR part 611;
- (2) Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasts—7 CFR part 612;
- (3) Plant Materials for Conservation—7 CFR part 613;